

HOUSE of COMMONS !

Extract of a Letter, dated Thursday the 26th of April, 1792, from GEORGE GORDON, in Newgate, to HENRY ADDINGTON, the Speaker of the House of Commons, on the Subject under Consideration.

“THE measures now before the Committee of the House of Commons, for abolishing the Slave Trade, I find, “ are not intended at all for the mitigation of the sufferings of the Slaves in the West Indies; but seem “ rather calculated to throw the difficulties of quieting the discontents in Jamaica, alluded to in Lord Effingham’s “ speech, from off the shoulders of the Executive Power of the Home Department of Administration, upon the “ backs of the Governors, Planters, and Colonial Assemblies of the different Islands. Mr. Bailey and Mr. “ Vaughan well perceived and penetrated into the mischiefs that may attend the plan of Mr. Wilberforce; and “ whether the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Africa takes place gradually or immediately, it will make no “ change in the minds, nor effect any thing in favor of the Slaves in the islands of North America. Nay, will “ it not rather tend to aggravate their misery, and to excite the people of colour against the Colonial Assemblies, “ and the Planters, Trustees, and Mortgagees, when they find that his Majesty and the English Parliament look “ upon the African traffic, as so horrid and detestable, that they will no longer permit the English merchants to “ pursue it, and yet, that they themselves, though home-born subjects, in a British island, are to be left and “ continued in their former slavery, and kept as Breeders, and Fathers of Slaves, in this enlightened age, without “ even the smallest provision for their gradual advancement to a state of Freedom? It is natural to suppose also, “ that on hearing this news from England, particularly Mr. Beaufoy’s speech of yesterday, they will begin to “ compare the conduct of the National Assembly of France with the proceedings of our House of Commons, and “ they will find that there is a very material difference indeed between them.

“ The National Assembly *first* emancipated their own people of colour in St. Domingo, and now express their “ willingness to concert measures with England for abolishing the Slave Trade with the Princes of Africa. The “ House of Commons of England, it seems, are now also ready to concert measures with the European powers “ to abolish the Slave Trade with the Princes of Africa; yet, as to the wretched Slaves under the British Govern- “ ment, not one word is said; they are not to be emancipated, but to remain Slaves, and Breeders of Slaves, “ from generation to generation.

“ Is this equal liberty! is this humanity and justice! is it religion! is it walking according to the Light in the “ consciences of the friends of Mr. Wilberforce? Shall England now condemn man-stealing in Africa, and still “ keep her own natural-born subjects, her people of colour, in slavery in America?

“ The conscientious Quakers have set an example worthy the imitation of the Nations: they have pursued a far “ different method to prove their sincerity in the cause of humanity: they emancipated their own Slaves *first*, to “ have a clear conscience before God and man, and afterwards recommended to their neighbours to go and do “ likewise. But Mr. Wilberforce (*Massa King* Wilberforce, as he has been called, ‘till now, in the West Indies) by “ advising the Abolition of the African Slave Trade, and at the same time consenting to the continuance of slavery “ in the Islands, shews too plainly that the same spirit is at length found in him, which has been so severely branded “ and condemned in the Planters and Slave Traders. The idea of their breeding and increasing fast enough “ to supply young slaves on the estates, without the parents enjoying the comforts of liberty, and deprived as they “ are of the common Rights of Men in society, is absurd to the highest degree; for it is well known, that “ their slavery and ill-treatment have been the cause of their excessive diminishing, and the occasion of the demand “ and market for a constant supply of fresh Slaves from Africa. Their happiness and freedom seem the only pro- “ bable and natural means of increasing their numbers, and securing the tranquillity of the Planters.

“ It might be more advisable too for Mr. Secretary Dundas to refrain from his intention of enlightening their “ minds by religious instruction and education, through the Diocesan influence of the Bishop of London, if he does “ not intend also to admit the people of colour to the benefit of the English Constitution; for, in the few first pa- “ ges of their Bibles, these poor African strangers would find it is written, that ‘ *One law shall be to him that is “ home-born, and unto the STRANGER that sojourneth among you. As ye are, so shall the STRANGER be before the “ Lord. One law and one manner shall be for you.*’

“ It is rather surprising that none of the Opposition Members have yet taken notice of the glaring inconsistency “ of Mr. Dundas, and *Massa King* Wilberforce, in supporting and preserving the Right of Slavery, and of trans- “ ferring English Subjects from Planter to Planter, and from Father to Son, like the cattle and live stock on the “ estates in the West Indies, and in the same breath totally abolishing the long-legalized traffic of the London, Li- “ verpool, and Bristol Slave Traders on the Coast of Africa.

“ The sending over and settling Colonies of *white people* at Sierra Leona, and the Island of Bulam, on the prin- “ ciples of the Rights of Men, and equal liberty, and still retaining and fixing the Egyptian yoke of servitude and “ oppression upon the necks of the *black people*, imported into our Colonies, from the very same places, is also very “ inconsistent and remarkable, and so unjust and deceitful, that it may occasion the massacre of the British Settlers “ at Sierra Leona and Bulam, who went out under the patronage of his Majesty’s Ministers. It is somewhat pro- “ blematical, however, in the present state of parties, or rather factions, at this crisis, whether our Constitutional “ Societies, our Tookes, and our Paines, and our Country Committees of correspondence, for abolishing Slavery, “ and introducing the Rights of Men, will not suffer themselves to be led, a little longer by the nose, on account of “ the coalition of Fox and Pitt on this subject.”